



THE GREAT WHAUP

A ZINE FOR THE LOVE OF CURLEWS

WINWORTH

the birds will sing

that you are part

of everything

won't you open up your eyes

Welcome to the Great Whaup*!

This zine is a love letter to curlews, to celebrate them and acknowledge the joy they bring to so many of us.

It was put together from a call out on Instagram and features contributions from people across the UK and also from the US, in the form of poetry, artwork, sightings, reflections, journal entries and more.

The zine is also a call to action. Curlews are endangered - their numbers in the UK have halved in the last 20 years - and there is a real and urgent need for us as humans to do our part in trying protect them so that they survive.

There are many actions we can all take to act for curlews, including supporting the amazing work of Curlew Action. All proceeds from the sale of this zine are going to them. You can find out more about them and their work on the following page.

April 2024

*'Whaup' is the Scottish/Pennine name for curlew

To find out more about Curlew Action and how you can support curlews, visit **www.curlewaction.org**

Curlews: where culture meets conservation

A friend of mine once said that curlews are special because they mean something different to each of us. To her, they are a meadow bird, whose bubbling call heralds spring, to others they are a moorland bird, or winter birds that gather in flocks on coastal mudflats or lowland floodplains. These birds evoke huge emotion in people wherever they are heard and have inspired artists and poets through the ages. Across the world, curlews appear in myths and legends as omens of death, long-nosed goblins, helpful guides or simply as a bird who got his nose stuck under a rock and in the process of pulling it out, stretches to create the long bill we see today.

The loss of such a precious piece of cultural history is unthinkable and would leave an irreplaceable hole in our landscape. Yet the decline of curlews in the UK has been rapid, with a 50% decline in 25 years. This decline reflects the range of challenges facing curlew including predation of chicks and eggs, early silage cutting, intensive forestry in breeding areas and recreational disturbance. Curlews are caught in the crossfire of many of the thorny debates about how we manage our landscape in the UK, they are a bird that brings together communities from artists to farmers, policy makers to dog walkers.

We all have a part to play in protecting curlew. Curlew Action is a charity dedicated to reversing the decline of curlew through awareness raising, supporting practical conservation and facilitating open discussion between those who are able to protect curlew. Our monthly webinar series discusses some of the big topics in curlew conservation including predator control, intensive farming, headstarting, curlew diets and migration. These events are free to attend and recordings are stored on our website for anyone wishing to find out more. If you live in a nesting area, our Ground Nesting Birds signs on our website are a great way to protect your local curlew from recreational disturbance.

Ellen Bradley, Curlew Action



in flight

‘ I associate the sound of the curlew with the moorland near my childhood home, and heard on our regular visits to the Yorkshire Dales during the school holidays.

I’ve written a poem for you, using the written sounds of the curlew call found in my collection of old and new(ish) bird identification books.’

Coor-lee

hi-hi-h**U**

cur**R**l-lee

cur-**L**ew

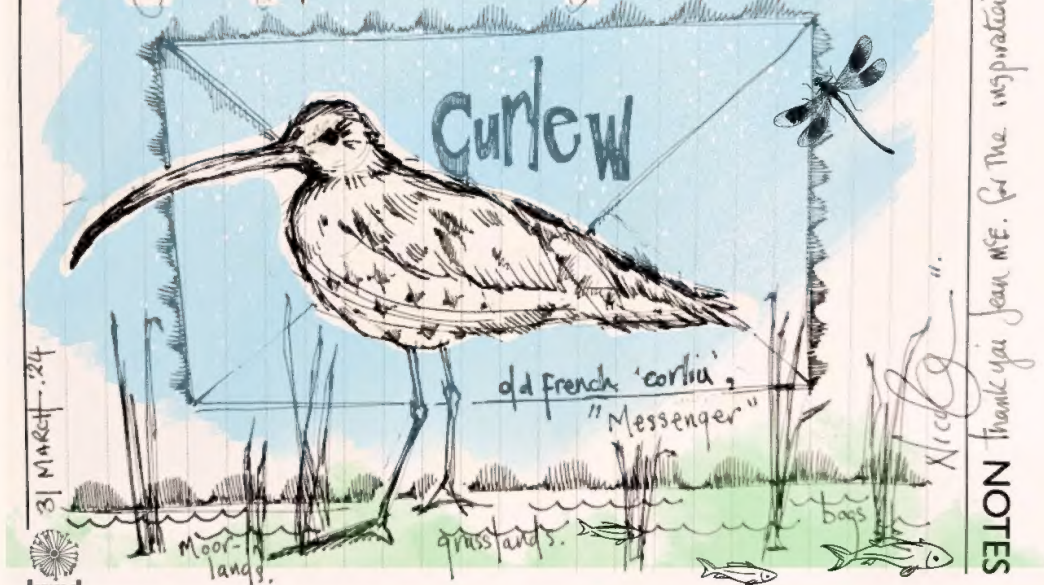
que**E**, quee, quee

coor**W**ee

'I was up in Keld last week
and we arrived late on
Friday night, the curlews
were super noisy, I think
they were arriving too!
So amazing'



Drawing this gifted me 2 lonely conversations with strangers



Thank you Jean M.E. for the inspiration
NOTES

i thought
curlews were
kiwis but with
longer beaks.



Anticipating curlew

The first year we moved to the house between the woods and the moor, I was desperate to see them. I'd heard them before, of course, but on the flatland and estuary, years ago. But I'd never lived close to them, within walking distance of a nest.

By the last week in March everyone had seen one. But not me. Someone says they heard one from the end of the street, but I only see magpies and crows. The lapwing come back, displaying over the cow pasture, but the curlew evade me. I pick up Companion Piece by Ali Smith to distract myself. One of the characters is a curlew. The swallows arrive, there are social media posts about curlew across the valley, I see some plover and hear a buzzard above the woods.

Then, on April Fools Day, I take the dog out for a walk in the brief sunshine. I open the gate onto the moor and think I hear one, but then think I want to hear one so much I'm probably making it up. We climb onto Low Moor and hear a few larks, see a couple of grouse and some wheatear, but don't hear or see anything resembling a curlew.

There are two shapes in the delphs. Could they be? And then that call. Only short, but so distinctive. The shapes shift and disappear. Oh, well, at least I saw them, distantly. Then, as we cross the Bronze Age ring cairn, it comes again, out of the delphs. That call, both heart-breakingly sad and joyous. I'm glad that they're here, I'm sad that there aren't more of them.

Then they are everywhere. Every walk for the next couple of months involves seeing or hearing a curlew. We avoid going up the slack because they're nesting there. If I crane my neck out of the attic window I can sort-of see where they are. The swallows arrive, the lapwing leave and then the curlew are gone again. They just slip away quietly. It takes a while to remember that I haven't heard them for days, that I haven't seen them. It's rained every day for three weeks.

Curlews are the colour of winter

Curlews are the colour of winter mud. When I was a child, my grandparents lived by a vast estuary at the southern edge of Cumbria. We'd visit them over Christmas and tramp down to the coast in the drizzle, where we could jump on the grey-brown mud and make it turn to grey-brown jelly. My grandad would hold his huge black binoculars up to our eyes, gesticulating at a grey-brown lump far against the steely sky. "Curlew!"

Then as an adult, I moved to Yorkshire. There are no curlews in the winter here: they move to the coast to feed from the mud, fleeing the high moorland which would, prior to human-made climate change, be too frozen for their beaks to penetrate. It's not until the spring that they return, their bubbling cry sounding across the dales - and that sound, with its promise of warmer days and brighter skies, thrills me. I hold first-curlew days close to my chest each year. May 2020 on Blubberhouses Moor, the emptiest place my partner and I could think of on the first day we could go for a real walk; February 2021 on Middleton Moor, a solo bike ride on the first day I felt the sun's warmth reflected from the earth; March 2022 on the Six Dales Trail, rising out of Otley into Washburndale in the bird-bright early morning. Each one roots me in time and space, reminding me that I too am a creature bound by the seasons, that I too belong in this peaty earth of my chosen home.

Curlews are the colour of winter mud, but they are the sound of spring rain.



I always think it's easier
to associate curlews with mudflats
and coastal regions because
in the past that's where I used
to see them - and they're easier to
spot than when they're hiding in
long grass on a moor or meadow
concealing a nest. We not seen
them here. But I have heard them!



I first got introduced to the curlew in 2018 and have completely fallen in love with this most beautiful and extraordinary bird ever since. I am proud to say that I can now identify their calls, always looking forward to their return for nesting, it is the most uplifting sound and makes me feel very emotional. I have supported the protection of the Curlew since which has included documenting the first calls or return adding to the live map in an area I used to live and other local projects for the protection of the Curlew.





old light calling

feather jostles air

opening rift where

bairn runs in - so nearly us

wales is to the left ov england always
n cas newydd (newport) built on affray
the less you have the more we share

futures commissioner
(she speaks for those to come)
is down the wetlands

blocking choke ov un-need
stopping the con ov bypass

willow, teasel, warbler
teases

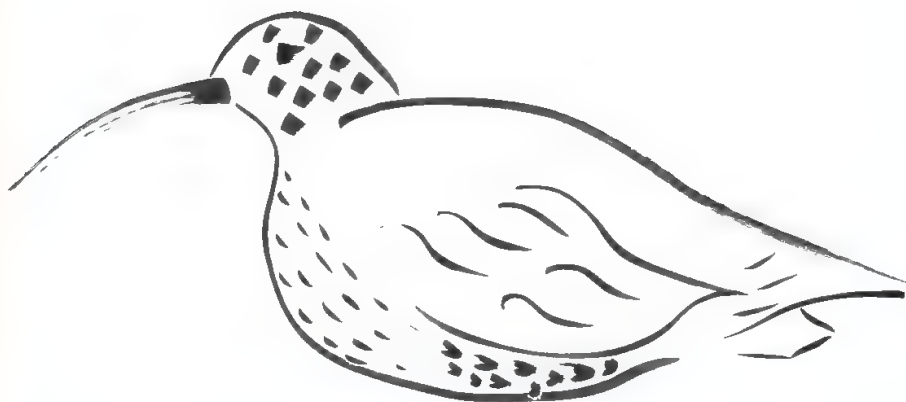
insurgent-urgent heartbeats ov wind
turbines above sedge still tinnitus growl

curlews slow engineered wing n liquid single

sweet melancholias n true

old light calling (so) many home

based on a curlew
how would you decorate yours?
gobscure 24ce



'yu have already survived'

Somerfield

I crouch in the garden like a fungus
while a small bird with a curlew beak pecks

wheat from my hand, revving the engine
of song within its speckled breast

and you're leaning in the doorway of our forever
home, sipping nettle tea from a hand thrown

mug, on the outskirts of an atrophied
industrial town. The night after this dream

as headlights string metal webs across our ceiling
we plain for farmland birds after watching

an archival documentary and read a wiki-litany
of defunct supermarkets. On yawning banks

I wait for new unknowables to wade out
from the reeds, floodlit by Somerfield's glow

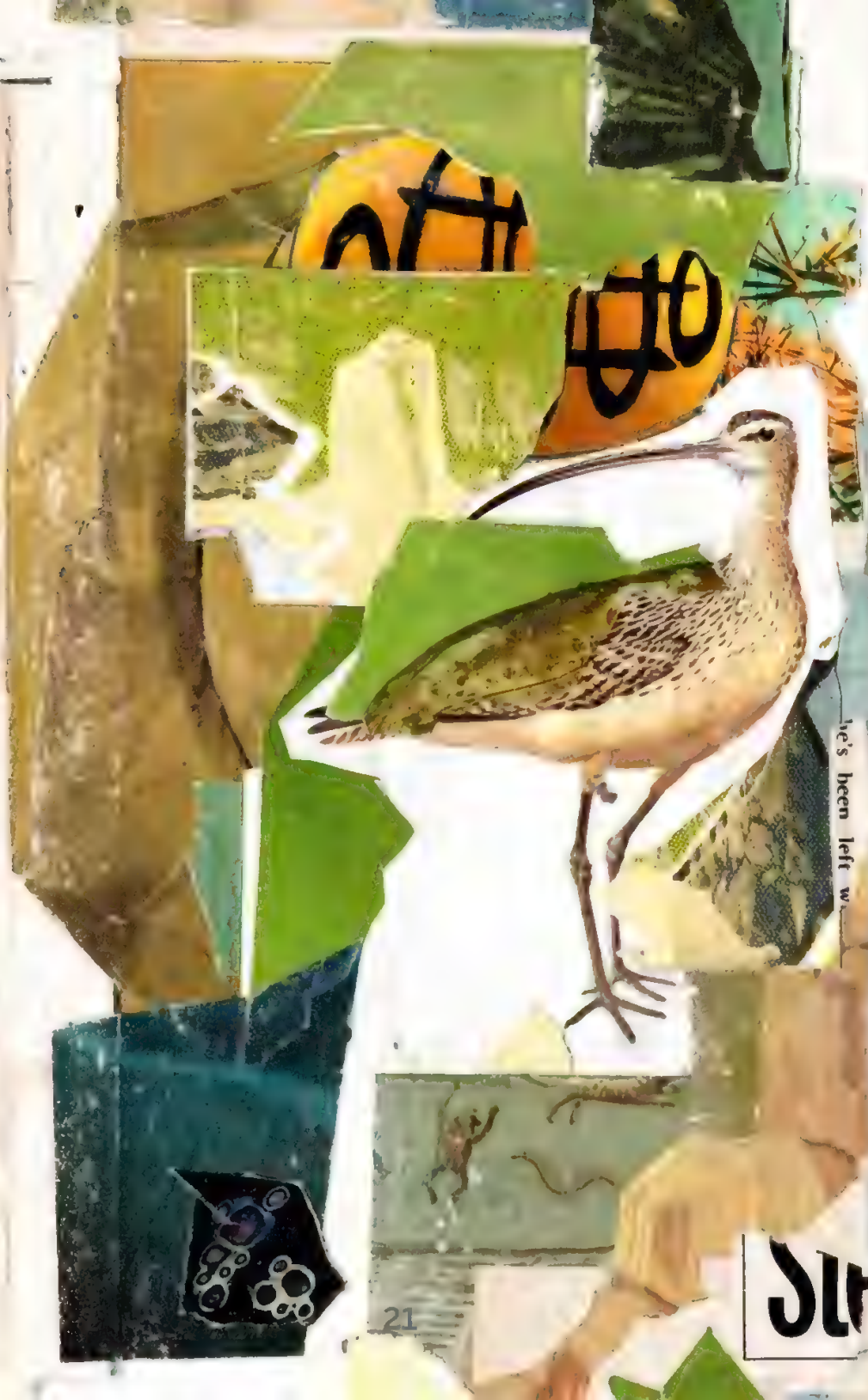
A curlew's nest is called
a 'scrape' and is just like
a hollow in the grass

Curlews take 90 days to nest
successfully from egg laying
to chick fledgling.

only about
10% of chicks

survive /





he's been left w

‘The curlews will be arriving around about now at the Marches Mosses on the Shropshire border with Wales. And although I rarely actually see them, because they tend to nest in areas away from public paths, I love to hear their haunting call. Since the BogLIFE peatland restoration at the Mosses, I believe that the number of nesting pairs has increased, but I know they remain imperilled and need careful protection’.



These thoughts interrupted

Hearing and feeling the wind as we walked up Bingley Road, the roar of it in the little woods next to Pauline's old house.. The sensations through my hands and face remind me that I am here.

Ever-changing clouds and sky, now dark and dense then breaking open revealing blue, sun momentarily on my face, warming it.

We see sheep and newborn lambs in the fields and my thoughts darken. I feel pain in my heart to know what will happen to them. Why can't I make peace with it. They at least have this moment, with their mothers and the other lambs, to play in the open green field, and feel the sun and wind on their faces as I do.

These thoughts are interrupted as we pass the dog field and we see a curlew, flying..

OH!!

A welling of emotion surges through my body like an occupation. What is this feeling? Joy? Now-ness?

Turning around to come back home, we see a mass movement of rain and hail over the field ahead, and marvel for just a second before it hits us, stinging hard into our faces. I try to turn my face from it and lift my hood to cover my face, while Bobby lunges forward.

Then it's over and there the sun silvers in the puddles again, and we breathe and I laugh out loud.

My mood is shifted. We descend the hill, looking over the valley with the shadows of clouds, moving moving across the land.

Letting life live through us, yes yes yes to it all.

CURLEW LOG

DATE:		TIME:
SEASON:		HABITAT:
LOCATION:		GPS:
WEATHER:		TEMPERATURE:
BIRD'S LOCATION	BIRD'S ACTIONS:	
<input type="checkbox"/> GROUND		
<input type="checkbox"/> SKY	DID THE CURLEW CALL?:	
<input type="checkbox"/> WALL	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
PHOTO/SKETCH		
NOTES:		



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Edited and collated by Jean McEwan & Charlie Hatpin




CURLEW ACTION

This area is home to
GROUND NESTING BIRDS
between March and July

Please help protect them by:

- keeping to paths
- keeping dogs on leads



Thank you 

Find
out
more!

Listen to
a curlew
call!



CURLEW ACTION

